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A series of suggested modifications in the scientific reporting of counseling research is presented. The suggested modifications are in five areas. (1) characteristics of research designs in counseling research, (2) within group differences in outcome research, (3) research on the selection of counselors, (4) research on the assessment of counseling outcomes, and (5) research on counseling process and professional interventions. Research design characteristics recommended are: (1) simultaneous consideration of client characteristics, counseling strategy, and outcome measures, and (2) development of codes for describing clients, counseling strategies, and outcome measures precisely. Counseling research designs should focus upon individual differences within and between clients, and should develop simultaneously a system for communicating this individuality. Counselor selection criteria should emphasize what a counselor can produce, as well as what he is. Longitudinal studies to ascertain the predictive relationship between counselor characteristics and client outcomes should be made. Three general propositions on the assessment of counseling outcomes are reviewed. These propositions begin to bridge the gap between overspecific behavorist goals and generalized counseling goals. (PS)

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Suggested Modifications in Scientific Inquiry and Reporting of Counseling Research*

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The purpose of this report is to present a series of suggested modifications in the scientific reporting of counseling research. The impetus for this report developed from two conferences on research problems in counseling sponsored by Washington University and the Central Midwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Inc., and held at Washington University in January and May of 1967.

The suggested modifications are in five areas: characteristics of research designs in counseling research, within group differences in outcome research, research on the selection of counselors, research on the assessment of counseling outcomes, and research on counseling process and professional interventions.

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Recommendation #1 Characteristics of Research Designs in Counseling Research

Research designs should allow a simultaneous consideration of client characteristics which seem to be associated with specific measures of outcome when a given counselor strategy is employed. By definition, research so constructed would meet Krumboltz's (1968) test of relevance in that counselors would behave differently depending on the findings of the research.

The advantage of a simultaneous consideration of client characteristics, counseling strategy, and outcome measures is that research so conceptualized will ultimately result in an experience table which can facilitate the selection of the potentially most successful counselor strategy. The practicing counselor can decide before counseling begins, on the basis of the characteristics of his client, and the client's stated goals for counseling, what approach the counselor should use and the probability for success.

If this comprehensive experience table is to be ultimately developed, it will be necessary for professional journals, and other means of communication within the profession, to adopt a practice of reporting in greater detail the research methodology employed, the characteristics of the clients, the precise nature of the professional interventions, and the outcome measures.

To facilitate research retrieval and communication, the details of each method for reflecting individual differences in conceptualizing client characteristics could be given a code. This code would allow a ready comparison from study to study on the basis of client characteristics.

The second feature in this comparison structure would be an evaluation of what the counselor actually did in the counseling intervention. By shifting the focus to observable counselor behavior, and by specifying those aspects of a counseling intervention which should be described in detail, it will be possible to develop a code for counseling strategies as well.

Such a taxonomy of counselor strategies should include both aspects of the structure of the counseling such as frequency, duration, and length of session, as well as aspects of the counselor's verbal and non-verbal behavior within the counseling session. Examples of this would be the use of reflection of feeling, interpretation, or restructuring.

Along with the codes for clients and counselor strategies, the nature of the outcome measure in terms of observable human change and the method by which such criteria were translated into meaningful measures become the final aspect of counseling research which needs to be coded. The code, when linked simultaneously to client characteristics and counselor strategy, may assist in bridging the gap between the specific goals of counseling presented by those with a behavioral orientation, and those of a client centered persuasion which tend to be more global in nature. The emphasis in any case will be on the relation of the outcome measure to the total design.

The codes will provide a method for systematically comparing counseling studies, as well as developing a set of relatively standard methods for describing clients, counseling strategies, and outcome measures. The common language communicated through the code can prove an important addition to reporting in the professional literature.

Recommendation #2 Within Group Differences in Outcome Research

Most counseling research projects have followed a classic research design. After treatment, a counseled group is compared to a control group on a series of variables. There are obvious problems of finding (1) A "real" control group (similar in all respects to the experimental group save counseling) and (2) "genuine" criteria which measure expected outcome (change in attitudes, conceptions of self, grades in school, or other relevant variables). While much research has focused on these substantive problems, research which demonstrates a positive effect for counseling remains the exception rather than the rule. Eysenck's (1952) criticism has still not been effectively muted, nor, more recently, Astin's (1961) warning concerning the reification of counseling as functionally autonomous from reality.

Bergin (1963), in writing for a symposium of effects of psychotherapy, chose the title "Negative Results Revisited." In this article, a rather striking conclusion was presented; there was almost no research about the differences within a group of counselees. When counseled groups were examined, it was shown that some clients improved substantially while others actually deteriorated--that treatment "made" clients worse. A more adequate starting point for research in counseling may be a close examination of differences within groups of counselees.

Sprinthall (1968) emphasized the importance of assessing these within group differences in arguing that by shifting the analysis to prior client conditions and relevant pretreatment variables, it will be possible to identify the individual characteristics of those clients

who got worse, did not change, and changed on the basis of counseling. Sprinthall's focus on within group differences marks a shift to greater individual analysis and away from the assumption of homogeniety in response to counseling which has longed both plagued and prevented advancements in counseling research.

Related to the systems evaluated above would be a simultaneous consideration of the client from three viewpoints: (1) psychological characteristics in terms of traits or types; (2) demographic social statistics and considerations of age, grade and intelligence; and (3) presenting problem. As the Editor of Phi Delta Kappan (1963) noted, the research on underachievement will "prove anything you care to prove." One influential reason that he could make such a generalization was the high degree of dissimilarity in clients who had been all categorized as "underachievers." Further specification of the nature of the clients being studied and on whom subsequent generalizations were being based would have gone a long way toward avoiding the current state of confusion in the literature on this topic.

By looking at the psychological characteristics of the client, we provide ourselves with a focus for systematically evaluating the client as seen by the counselor, whether his predilection is as diverse as psychoanalytic or self theory. As part of initial diagnosis, a statement could be made about the client in dynamic terms as seen by the counselor as psychologist and diagnostician. By agreeing on the range of classification criteria to be used, psychological characteristics could be comparable from study to study, rather than merely lables such as the misleading "underachiever".

By evaluating social statistics, we can consider such factors as socio-economic status, age, grade, and intelligence of the client. Again, by agreeing on the procedure for routinely reporting social statistics, studies could be made more comparable. With this information readily communicable, the problem encountered in the underachiever literature will be avoided.

The final method recommended achieving interstudy comparability related to evaluation of the presenting problem or the difficulty as the client sees it. While the range of conceivable presenting problems is theoretically very large there is evidence (Callis, 1965; Miller, 1963; Whiteley, 1967) that the range of the client's presenting problems can be specified with a moderate range of alternatives, at least within educational settings where the bulk of counseling research is taking place.

In summary, a major recommendation for change in research in client selection in the future is that counseling research designs need to become more sensitive to individual differences within and between clients, and simultaneously a system for communicating this individuality must be developed so that more sensitive comparisons and generalizations can be made utilizing the results of different studies.

Recommendation #3 Research on the Selection of Counselors

A traditional area for counseling research has been the study of counselor characteristics or traits. The assumptions are explicit. Personality traits such as sociability or friendliness are conceptualized as relevant indicators or appropriate dimensions within the personality

organization of the individual counselor. There are even a few graduate training facilites which use some of these so-called trait measurements as part of their selection procedures. The assumptions of this approach are at least problematic and certainly the research evidence is equivocal. Cottle (1953), has reviewed the work of Bailey (1940), Baas (1950), Brown (1946), DiMichael (1949), Wrenn (1952), and others. He notes that, "In the light of the above data it seems obvious that most of the attempts to evaluate the personal characteristics of counselors are sporadic and unrelated" (1953, p. 450).

There is little in this research that attempts to relate a specific rationale for particular traits to a theory of counseling except in the most general sense, for example, if counseling includes working with people then the counselor ought to score high on a trait of "liking" people. Cox (1945) attempted research along similar lines in her examination of counselor characteristics through a case study technique. She lists 24 traits ranging from fairness and sincerity to health and a sense of mission. Other descriptions of the counselor as a person range from qualities such as "belief in each individual" and "commitment to individual human values" (ASCA 1964) to the counselor "as a woman" (Farson, 1954).

It seems rather fruitless to continue this line of inquiry. Certain human qualities may indeed be relevant to counseling. The extent to which these qualities are really important and differentiating, however, remains an open and certainly an empirical question.

Mosher (1968) outlined the basis for a reconceptualization of

counselor selection from what the counselor <u>is</u> to what he can <u>produce</u>. Mosher noted that the issues of who to select and how to train are inseparable from the conceptual issue of what effects the counselor is to produce. This marks a shift from the more traditional approach in counselor selection based on the trait model.

A direction for future research studies was proposed by Patterson (1968) in his call for longitudinal studies of predictive relationships. It has obviously proven much simpler for counseling researchers to do studies of students in training, and to terminate their research investigations at that point. Patterson indicated that while concurrent studies can make contributions, it is only from longitudinal studies that more promising information can be gained.

Another direction Patterson recommended was an exploration of the Truax (1963) and Truax and Carkhuff (1964a, 1964b, 1965a, 1965b) studies which demonstrated that four characteristics in counselors which can be measured empirically and related to outcomes in clients following counseling. These conditions Patterson lists as: (1) empathy, "or the ability of the counselor to understand sensitively and accurately the clients' inner experience"; (2) unconditional positive regard, or nonpossessive warmth and acceptance of the client; (3) self-congruence, or genuineness and transparency (authenticity) in the counseling relationship; and (4) concreteness or specificity of expression. Whether these dimensions can be applied to applicants prior to training is an empirical question of high priority in Patterson's estimation, and must be subject to longitudical studies to ascertain the predictive relationship.

Recommendation #4 Research on the Assessment of Counseling Outcomes

Patterson (1968) raised the question of whether a definition of counseling should not specify the changes which would constitute the outcome criteria based on the counseling. He noted the difficulty inherent in such an attempt:

> Goals of counseling have been variously defined, including such things as self-acceptance, self-understanding, insight, self-actualization, self-enhancement, adjustment, maturity, independence, responsibility, the solving of a specific problem or making a specific decision, learning how to solve problems or make decisions, and the elimination or the development of specific behaviors. There are those who feel that the goal or goals of counseling should be identical for all clients, while others, such as the behaviorists see general goals as vague, indefinable, and unmeasurable. Some would see many of the specific goals of the behaviorists as trivial, partial, or limited in significance or meaning.

If Patterson has outlined correctly these specific problems for us, a future direction for counseling researchers would be an attempt to develop ways of taking the measurable and definable goals of the behaviorists and relating them systematically to the higher order but more general goals such as self-enhancement or maturity.

Krumboltz (1968) offered three general propositions for research in counseling which could provide a first step toward bridging the gap which Patterson and others identified. Krumboltz recommended that future research should have three characteristics. First, it should

be designed to discover improved ways of helping clients. Second, the research should be designed so that different possible outcomes lead to different counseling practices. In this context, he presented the test of relevance which asks what counselors would do differently if the results of the proposed projects came out one way or another. Third, Krumboltz argued that counseling outcome criteria should be tailored to what the client and the counselor involved regard as desired behavioral changes.

The central focus of this outcome procedure would be observable behavior changes. By specifying goals with the client, they can assume major importance and meaning with him for his life. While the goals would be different for each client, they could well be higher order goals and be salient to the problems which brought the client to counseling originally.

Recommendation #5 Research on Counseling Process and Professional Interventions

The information yield from studies in counseling and psychotherapy is distressingly disproportionate to the expenditure of resources involved in mounting them. Part of the responsibility for this state of affairs must of course be borne by the designs employed. The present modes of communication, however, have contributed substantially to the reduction of the percentage of the information generated by these studies which is made available to the research consumer. Counseling researchers need to report the results of their studies differently. Editors must require more explication of what the counselor did as professional intervention.

Windle (1952) did a comparative study of psychological tests in relation to response to psychotherapy. As part of his tabulation, he listed tests as well as the counseling method employed. Regrettably, he was forced to have as a major entry the notation NG, which stood for "not given". Therapists simply were not spelling out the nature of their counseling intervention. This must be done in detail, and done in a way which is communicable to a wide variety of counselors.

There is far too little specification in most studies to allow for any meaningful replication of them. Worse, there is virtually never enough specification to allow for a reasonable comparison between practice in other settings and that which the study in question investigated. General labels abound, e.g., "traditional insight therapy," "psychoanalyically oriented treatment", "client centered therapy", "gestalt therapy". In special cases, the reader might have been provided with a sketch of the rationale and a very few brief and highly selected illustrative examples of the treatment's application. But he is almost without exception excluded from any firmer grip on the actual process of therapy as it was actually applied to the cases on which the research was done.

The authors of such articles should be required by journal editors to make readily available to professional readers typescripts of portions of the therapy with a representative number of clients. The sampling process by which the typescript excerpts would be specified by the journals. For instance, the general requirement might specify that excerpts be composed of three minute segments drawn at random from each third of every fourth interview, and from the first and last

interviews. Optimally, such samples would be taken from the therapy of all clients. However, one might conceivable provide a less extensive sample for most of the clients. This information might be made available through the American Documentation Institute. The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), however, is probably the most appropriate depository.

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